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COMMUNITY HOSPITALITY: IMPROVING ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT FOR REFUGEES

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ABSTRACT

When refugees are resettled into a destination, not-for-profit organisations offer frontline services to ease refugees' experiences of trauma and marginalisation, providing advocacy and welcome through reception processes, translation services and multicultural centres. These organisations facilitate, bridge and negotiate the former refugees' daily experiences of vulnerability, trauma, resilience, inclusion and hostility in a climate of limited resourcing. The degree and effectiveness of welcome given by these service organisations is of importance to how quickly refugees feel they belong and can settle quickly in their new society. Adopting the framework of 'community hospitality', this paper presents the findings of original research conducted with 34 not-for-profit organisations in New Zealand. Ketso, a creative, participatory tool was used as a community engagement method. The results indicate how these not-for-profit organisations felt the welcome, advocacy and support for former refugees could be better organised to support the settlement process. The barriers and challenges to the provision of community hospitality by community organisations are discussed, and priorities identified to improve the refugee resettlement process and outcomes.

KEYWORDS: Community hospitality; refugee resettlement; not-for-profit organisations; advocacy.

INTRODUCTION

Previous research shows that most refugees intend to stay in the new society into which they are resettled but report difficulties upon entry, including a lack of awareness of available services, problems finding housing, employment and accessing health care, low self-confidence, no close friends, poor health, language barriers and discrimination (Quinn, 2014; Sim & Bowes, 2007). Refugees are extremely vulnerable due to a combination of language difficulties, detention, cultural norms and the trauma of past experiences (Manning & James, 2011). There is a need for them to feel a sense of belonging to a community in which they can trust and feel included, rather than excluded because of cultural differences (Marlowe, 2015; Netto, 2011). Under the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) annual refugee quota programme, New Zealand opens its doors annually to a quota of approximately 1,000 refugees. From 2005 until 2015, six nationalities of refugees were predominant: Myanmar, Bhutan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Colombia and Sri Lanka (Immigration New Zealand, 2014).

Given the above reported resettlement difficulties, there is an urgent call for improved advocacy and services for this vulnerable population, and greater attention to the human rights of those being settled in New Zealand in the future (Manning & James, 2011). Not-for-profits, community groups and NGOs play a crucial role by providing services, connections and advocacy for refugees. These organisations seek to provide services to meet the needs of refugees who arrive with language issues and in need of medical assistance, housing and long-term support as they adjust to their new environment (Steimel, 2010). Using the framework of 'community hospitality', this paper aims to understand how not-for-profit organisations feel

the welcome, advocacy and support for former refugees could be better organised to support the settlement process.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The two main approaches to refugee resettlement adopted have focused on either medical issues or the social inclusion perspective (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2003). The medical approach primarily focuses on issues and services related to mental health, stress and other traumas associated with forced migration. The social inclusion approach integrates services that develop self-efficacy and empowerment to encourage former refugees to become involved in their community and represent their experiences and issues. Regardless of the approach taken to support refugees, researchers have argued that there is a need to move beyond frameworks that position refugees as helpless which "misrepresents the diversity of refugee experiences [and] helps legitimise decision-making [by others] for refugees" (Kisiara, 2015: 163). Researchers have indicated that organisations that integrate some form of advocacy in their services create contexts to enable former refugees to be involved in the critical framing of issues that relate to their experiences, knowledge and future (Cambridge & Williams, 2004; Kisiara, 2015).

Advocacy has no diverse paradigms associated with each approach but at its basic level it has been defined as "speaking up", empowerment, social justice, equity, representation and "to support people who are devalued or discriminated against" (Forbat & Atkinson, 2005: 322). It is seen as a "unique type of relationship" that develops based on trust between the person and the advocate (Henderson & Pochin, 2001: 82). It has been identified as an "effective [process] where people, for whatever reasons, lack the support of a network of friends and contacts to

call on upon in times of need" (Forbat & Atkinson, 2005: 323). Advocacy ranges from formal approaches in organisational services such as legal aid, to more informal voluntary approaches.

The continuing psychological impacts of trauma experiences prior to resettlement are widely discussed in previous refugee studies literature (Davidson, Murray, & Schweitzer, 2008; Green, 2006; Vincent, Jenkins, Larkin, & Clohessy, 2013). Defining resettlement as "a process during which a refugee, having arrived in a place of permanent asylum, gradually re-establishes the feeling of control over his/her life and develops a feeling that life is back to normal", Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2003: 62) conclude that the ability of former refugees to successfully overcome practical and emotional challenges during the resettlement process depends on various factors, including refugees' own resources as well as support services provided upon arrival in the country of resettlement. Currently, there are no studies which have sought to specifically determine the nature and degree of welcome for refugees in New Zealand, nor how the welcome could be improved.

Given its association with hosts and guests-strangers, the concept of welcome is well positioned in previous literature on notions of hospitality (Lynch, 2017). Indeed, previous work by hospitality scholars, Derrida (1997, 1999, 2000), Cornu (2008) and Ben Jelloun (1999), has explored the notion of hospitality as welcome for migrants and refugees. In particular, Derrida's theory (1997) offers the notion of the 'threshold' of hospitality where hospitality may be offered or refuted. Cockburn-Wootten, McIntosh and Phipps (2014) argue that the threshold of hospitality can be viewed in terms of the practice of advocacy or role of the advocate who becomes a voice and source of empowerment for the vulnerable, including protection, care provision and service. Advocacy can involve working between and with individuals, groups

and policy makers to improve conditions and "points to the critical role objective advocacy can play at certain points in the lives of refugees" (Cambridge & Willaims, 2004: 99). Indeed, with regards to refugee-focused service provision, there is evidence to show that many existing services have been unsuccessful in facilitating refugees in becoming a part of their new community (for example, Woodley & Williams, 2012). The lack of success is primarily seen as an overreliance on an interventionist approach, leading to negative experiences for former refugees who have had traumatic previous experiences of authority, intervention and officialdom, and are often distrustful of using support services at all (Asgary & Segar, 2011). The nature of the welcome provided to former refugees and the nature of support provided to assist their resettlement needs careful consideration.

According to Nikunen (2014), the image of the open and global place, making use of the narrative of hospitality, is now produced more in connection to western commercial service businesses offerings rather than used with the new arriving asylum seekers. This leads to the following question: How can New Zealand services offered by organisations become more hospitable towards refugees? An important first step includes understanding efforts to protect refugees, which depends on grasping many issues – from the meaning of 'protection' and community collaboration to the complexities of aid distribution (Russell, 2002). In this context, being integrated into the *community* of the host country plays a crucial role for refugees. For some, community might be a word that embodies the promise of a universal togetherness, while for others, community might be the promise of living together without 'being as one' (Ahmed & Fortier, 2003).

To this end, we offer here the general term 'community hospitality', defined as the practice of welcome offered by community organisations to the vulnerable stranger, which may be provided through advocacy, shelter, food, care and/or settlement services. It is a concept based on traditional definitions of hospitality as welcome and care for the stranger, and one that focuses on service provision to assist advocacy and support. Thus, whilst the concept of community hospitality has wider applicability to other vulnerable groups, the concept is offered here to fill a gap in knowledge evaluating the role of the advocate, or the service provider, in providing welcome to refugees at national and local levels.

METHODOLOGY

This research was developed in partnership with local refugee-support service providers who were brought together for the Ketso workshop. The aim of the research was to bring refugee-support service providers together in a neutral space to think collaboratively about creative solutions to improve the welcome and support for refugees being resettled in New Zealand. A total of 34 organisations were represented in the research, including those providing services for resettlement, ethnic groups, women's groups, employment, policy, funding, advocacy, research, and English language training, for example. The research employed the Ketso method (www.ketso.com), with the participants divided into six groups and seated around six tables, each with their own Ketso workstation. The central consideration was 'organising the welcome and support for refugees in New Zealand'.

Originating from the fields of Education and Environmental Studies, Ketso is a portable toolkit that has previously been used in multiple disciplines to create engagement, co-learning and collaborative thinking among participants (Tippett, 2013; Tippett & How, 2011). The method

is based on theories of creative thinking (De Bono, 2009), mind mapping (Buzan & Buzan, 2006), experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) and multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1999), and is aligned with constructionist epistemology. It is designed to unlock participants' creativity. As it is based on inclusive and learning philosophies and systems thinking (see Tippett, Handley, & Ravetz, 2007), it is also designed to allow all members of the session to contribute equally, rather than allowing certain voices to dominate the group.

The Ketso toolkit and workstation consists of colourful, reusable leaf shapes that can be written or drawn on by participants and placed on a felt table-top workspace. The Ketso toolkit is focused on the analogy of a tree and uses physical shapes based on different coloured leaves, branches and a central tree trunk to encourage systematic but non-threatening communication in the planning process. Using the analogy of growth of a tree, Ketso enables individuals to contribute their ideas regarding a central problem or question; they identify what actions are working well, what could be improved, the key barriers, and opportunities for the future. The group then discusses those ideas, collaboratively they thematically organise the points before finally agreeing priority areas for action. As such, the main themes that emerge from the Ketso session are inductively co-created by the participants themselves throughout the session rather than by independent data analysis (see McIntosh & Cockburn-Wootten, 2016). Alternative planning tools such as focus groups can be seen as limiting because they impede mutual learning between participants; do not allow participants to engage in an active or meaningful manner; focus too much on problems and barriers, reducing creative thinking; do not focus on future planning or creative thinking for new solutions; do not innovate or animate the process, nor plan for consensus as a mechanism to achieve development outcomes (McIntosh & Cockburn-Wootten, 2016). The findings of the Ketso session are presented and discussed

below. Each of the six tables' common themes have been grouped under thematic headings in Table 1, below. The priority actions are also presented below.

FINDINGS

Overall, the Ketso outputs of the six groups revealed seven key themes. The themes are defined inductively by the labels given to each theme by participants during the Ketso outputs, and grouped to enable the comparison of similar ideas (see Table 1).

Table 1. Ketso output: Key common themes identified by participants.

Common theme	Themes identified by the six groups (branches of the six trees)
1. *Relationships to challenge discrimination*	• Relationships challenging discrimination (Table 1) • Networking and connections (Table 2) • Collaboration (Table 3) • Awareness (Table 4) • Creating opportunities (Table 5) • Networking (Table 6)
2. *Education*	• Understanding clients' needs (Table 1) • Community education (Table 2) • Education (Table 3) • Education (Table 4) • Creating opportunities (Table 5) • Enabling (Table 6)
3. *Resources, policy and service delivery*	• Resources and capacity coordination (service delivery) (Table 1) • Money / Government policy (Table 2) • Resources (Table 3) • Creating opportunities (Table 5) • Money / funding (Table 6) • Organisational development and policy (Table 6)
4. *Understanding refugees' needs*	• Understanding clients' needs (Table 1) • English language (Table 2) • Education (Table 3) • Help and support (Table 4) • Doing (Table 6)
5. *Empowerment and capacity building*	• Empowerment and capacity building (Table 1) • Community education (Table 2) • Participation (Table 3) • Help and support (Table 4) • Empowerment (Table 5) • Enabling (Table 6)
6. *Welcome and nurturing*	• Understanding clients' needs (Table 1) • Networking and connections (Table 2) • Warm fuzzy nurturing (Table 3) • Belonging (Table 4) • Communication (Table 5) • Values (Table 6)
7. *Research and advocacy for change*	• Research and advocacy for change (Table 1) • Generational attitude changes (Table 2) • Resources (Table 3) • Advocacy (Table 4) • Advocacy (Table 6)

THEME 1: RELATIONSHIPS TO CHALLENGE DISCRIMINATION

Across the six tables, there were common themes identified around the need for greater collaboration between stakeholders to share ideas, strengthen existing resettlement support, tackle support for refugees and crucially challenge discrimination (see Table 1). In terms of what was currently working well, participants identified multiple opportunities to further strengthen as well as build partnerships and better communicate. Aspects for improvement included greater support of refugees from other former refugees, such as in a buddy system, and increased opportunities for support organisations to gather together to think through issues. There were no reported barriers to achieving greater collaboration. Instead, stigmas and wider discrimination was seen as the greatest barriers in the support for refugees, notably that of New Zealand employers. Hence, there was a reported need to celebrate diversity in order to encourage the acceptance of difference, to increase the New Zealand public's awareness about the refugee journey and what it means to be a 'host community', and for accurate media reporting to align with this.

THEME 2: EDUCATION

Aspects of education for refugees and their children were reported to be very important across all of the participant groups (see Table 1). It was reported that education is a tool to empower and support refugees. Education was generally referred to among participants in relation to formal learning programmes, and wider cultural-awareness for both refugees and the host society. Aspects of education reported by the participants that are currently working well and could be strengthened included: English language training; work experience opportunities; cultural awareness training; training around understanding business in New Zealand culture; training in te reo language and tikanga Māori (indigenous) values; career advice; leadership

training; and assistance for special needs families. There was also the reported need to give greater training opportunities for volunteers, interpreters and employers.

In terms of educating by creating awareness in the wider New Zealand community, opportunities were identified around promoting events to celebrate the services that are going well and to develop a greater number of social activities to get people mingling. The greatest barriers identified were: the lack of awareness and education on cultural differences; language education; current fragmentation of services and associated funding; the difficulty in connecting former refugees with the wider community in which they now reside; and enabling education for all.

THEME 3: RESOURCES, POLICY AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Resourcing was seen as vital for supporting the refugee resettlement process by all participants. Across the six tables, there were common references made to the need for greater financial, political and volunteer labour resourcing (Table 1). Areas of resourcing that reportedly could be improved included: consistent funding streams; devolved funding decisions; better housing options; a co-ordinated volunteer network for the refugee community; greater support after the initial three-month volunteer period (perhaps to a five-year support programme); grouping of existing services and partnership funding; greater opportunities for refugee apprenticeship, training and employment; a hub to showcase and support refugee entrepreneurship; more volunteers to help with English language support; a shared database of support received by the refugees; scholarships for refugee-background tertiary students; and research to validate funded programmes. Sustainable resources to support and welcome refugees were identified as the major barrier to successful refugee resettlement. This included: a lack of funding for social

workers and support organisations in general; poor housing and employment opportunities; a lack of political will to make policy changes; and a lack of resourcing for driving lessons for former refugees.

THEME 4: UNDERSTANDING REFUGEES' NEEDS

Participants commonly reported the important need to listen, understand and have empathy for the needs of refugees and their children in effectively welcoming them and supporting their resettlement (Table 1). It was felt that current services in which staff and/or volunteers listen, talk to, respect, understand, empower, empathise with and help former refugees was something that was currently effective in the support provided. There was a commonly held view that more interpreter services could be offered and that it is important to ensure interpreters act ethically and in confidence. There was also a shared view that increased networking between organisations was important for ensuring refugees' needs are met and to connect them with opportunities. The main barriers identified by the participants in relation to identifying refugees' needs included: language barriers; lack of public awareness and discrimination; poor public transport infrastructure; and duplication of services.

THEME 5: EMPOWERMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Empowerment and capacity building for former refugees and refugee-background youth were identified as important aspects of refugee resettlement by all the participants (see Table 1) because they enable hope and independence and the fulfilment of dreams. Empowerment and capacity-building were generally aligned with a welcome incorporating empathetic value and experience, respect, language support and the achievement of independent living. Start-up projects that met an identified need; providing language support; providing ethnic support;

flexibility in the supply of services; providing a range of programmes supported by former refugees for refugees; and provision of relevant workshops were all identified as aspects of current service that were identified as working well to support refugee resettlement.

Aspects of capacity building that could be improved included: the need for more programmes for refugee youth and parenting programmes; pathways into employment and work experience services, especially in the rural areas; the need for more volunteers trained in facilitating empowerment; a greater number of interpreters across all services; more vehicles to overcome limitations in public transport infrastructure or to help those former refugees living far from bus stops; and offering regular cultural workshops to support awareness of diversity and social inclusion. The barriers to achieving greater capacity building for former refugees were noted as: English language barriers; cultural ignorance; motivation; a fragmented silo'd approach to services; and a lack of resource allocation.

THEME 6: WELCOME AND NURTURING

This theme relates to the nature of welcome offered to refugees to aid their resettlement into their new community so that they have a place in which they can begin to belong. Participants used phrases to describe the essence of this common theme, including, for example: 'welcoming and friendly'; 'creating warm and welcoming home'; 'smiling, welcoming people'; 'honour and respect each person'; 'having an open mind'; 'listening'; 'cooking'; 'talking'; 'having empathy'; 'connecting'; 'encourage'; 'help build confidence'; 'building and maintaining relationships'; 'support family and friends'; 'care for people'; 'make refugees feel at home'; 'nurturing'; 'warm fuzzy'. Essentially, the participants shared a common view about the way in which former refugees should be welcomed into New Zealand society, by

communities at large and through the provision of their services and wider communication (Table 1). The identified barriers with respect to the welcome were the health and family issues of the refugee families themselves, culture shock or hidden prejudice and fear in the wider New Zealand public, and negative media portrayals of the refugee crisis.

THEME 7: RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY FOR CHANGE

The importance of research and advocacy for supported refugee resettlement was reported as a specific theme by five out of the six groups of participants (Table 1). Participants identified community-based research as able to: open new ideas to help support and advocate for refugees and reduce barriers to resettlement; bring attention to key issues and the need for advocacy; identify adaptation strategies; lobby government for better policies; and validate the effectiveness of current programmes. The barriers to research and advocacy included: lack of adequate funding for research and advocacy delivery or the political will to fund opportunities; negative portrayals about refugees in the media (highlighting bad news stories); hidden prejudice and fear; and a lack of male voices in refugee research.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

There was a shared priority for participating organisations to further influence policy makers and to make the New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy work, perhaps by means of requesting an evaluation to investigate whether or not the goals have been effectively implemented. A further priority was the need for policies to encourage language development, to prioritising English language learning first over employment in relation to support services – especially to learning English at a higher level of education, and finding volunteers to assist with the fluency of learned English. The need for greater resourcing, especially funding, to

assist resettlement was also identified. Collaboration between government departments and NGOs, and development of a centralised data sharing system between agencies were also prioritised. In addition, participants collectively agreed that there remained an important priority to change the mind-set of the host community. Opportunities for positive media campaigns with the right mode and medium were discussed, including the need to showcase positive success stories and, through media stories, illustrate the stories of former refugees who have made a positive contribution to New Zealand society. Lastly, participants prioritised the need to increase host community involvement via the employment of former refugees and encouraging volunteering.

The three key significant issues arising from the themes are: representation of refugees; greater need for advocacy that overcomes structures and organisational silos; and thirdly to develop collaborative networks for change. While images representing the situations facing refugees are important, researchers have argued that they divert attention from a rights based perspective to relying on compassion (Kisiara, 2015). It further stigmatises and positions refugees as the helpless other and their situation as one of "suffering, deprivation and powerless" (163). In order to change this context, the participants identified that collaboration between organisations was crucial. In a sector of scare resources this would enable greater access, sharing of skills and knowledge in order to create changes in society. This approach would also allow support and training for the different services around issues of health, advocacy, biculturalism and multicultural approaches. For instance many health organisations that did not directly involve, either as employees or volunteers, former refugees were viewed with mistrust. In turn these organisations were unsure of how to meet former refugees' needs. Collaboration between organisations could overcome mistrust, question established assumptions and practices in service delivery thus developing the knowledge base for both

organisations. Kisiara (2015) argues this would move the positioning of refugees from passive to being involved in "critical discussions that appropriately implicate the dominate society in the challenges that refugees face, and that also engage in advocacy that seek to change conditions that lead to force migration" (170).

CONCLUSION

There is a call to increase New Zealand's quota of refugees (Double the Quota, 2017), and the notion of welcome has been determined as an important element in creative, healthy societies (Lynch, 2017). Embedded within these approaches are the actions and type of services required to address the welcome and needs of newly arrived refugees. Murray and Johnson (2011) note that organisations tend to respond with direct interventionist measures supported by government policies that endorse "punitive and exclusionary measures" (p. 326). Newly arrived and former refugees, however, may be reluctant and resistant to these interventionist practices, as these actions may remind them of the trauma and rejection they faced during their previous life struggles (Villa, Gonçalves, & Villy Odong, 2017). Alternatively, adopting practices from non-interventionist actions that draw on the paradigm of community hospitality develops relationships, trust and involvement. This approach entails "an open door policy and often a warm welcome to users, who are frequently referred to as 'guests' … minimum of rules … adopting a 'make a cup of tea first, ask questions later' approach" (p. 328). These approaches and other challenges to the provision of community hospitality by organisations were discussed and priorities identified to improve the refugee resettlement process and outcomes.

A strength and a challenge in the sector is that many refugees and the organisations providing services are from a breadth of diverse cultures, skills and life experiences. The trauma they

faced will have also interrupted and, in some cases, stopped access to and provision of educational and other support opportunities. All these suggest some serious limits and challenges to the provision of community hospitality. Overall, this study has illustrated the importance of organisations being able to communicate and work effectively in order to ensure that former refugees gain access to information and services that will support them in their resettlement into a new country.

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